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ABSTRACT

Despite ethical directives, most consultants do not understand fully how issues such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender impact organizational functioning. This paper presents a model of organizational culture that includes race and multicultural concerns. The cultural synergy model is based on the assumption that organizations have multiple world views. The paper outlines several key elements necessary to redefine organizational culture. Multicultural consultants of organizations are challenged to: (1) help members of the organization discover where their organizations stand along a continuum of cultural dimensions; (2) help members transform their organizations from monocultural to multicultural ones; (3) help their clients make organizational decisions based on transformed cultural norms or goals; and (4) devise culturally appropriate evaluation mechanisms to determine the merits of those systemic changes and attitudinal shifts. Eight characteristics of culturally appropriate organizations include: (1) acceptance of differing world views is affirmed and respected, not punished; (2) action is taken immediately to remedy bias in all its forms; (3) work performance is evaluated in culturally appropriate ways; and (4) human relationships are recognized as connective and collaborative. Some guidelines for consultants to use when working with organizations include: (1) organization culture is heterogeneous and flexible in accommodating divergent world views; (2) organizations recognize that their members vary in their perceptions of power and authority and ability to accept those power dynamics; and (3) organizations recognize that racial bias and prejudice are intertwined within the organizational structure. Two tables are included. (Contains 11 references.) (LMI)

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Multicultural Issues in Organizational Consultation:

A Conceptual Model for Intervention

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Abstract

A model of organizational culture to include issues of race and multicultural concerns is presented. Organizational consultants are encouraged to help groups redefine organizational cultural norms so that organizations can be transformed into multicultural, pluralistic work or learning environments.

Multicultural Issues in Organizational Consultation: a Conceptual Model for Intervention

Race is inextricably woven into the fabric of American society. It influences our political decisions, shapes the architectural and social design of American cities, and is factor analyzed into corporate investment choices. Just as these issues are woven into America's patchwork, so race is an inseparable part of organizational consultation. Yet, if you observe a consultant's practices, review a consultation journal, or talk to a consultant directly, you will discover very little about the role of race issues within organizational consultation.

Despite our ethical directives, most consultants do not understand fully how such issues as race, ethnicity, class, and gender impact organizational functioning. Yet, the importance of these issues to organizational systems, to individual clients, and to the entire consultation profession becomes apparent in the context of a global world and a multicultural marketplace.

This paper affirms a new understanding concerning the practice of consultation by suggesting that race and ethnicity issues combine to redefine an organization's culture. Borrowing from Nancy Adler's description of cultural change models (1980), a cultural synergy model is described which is based on

the assumption that organizations have multiple world views. This conceptual model suggests that multicultural views are complex and should be respected and valued within a healthy organization.

Reasons for Redefining Organizational Culture

Consultants may ask, why do we need to make sense of multicultural issues in consultation activities? Three reasons explain its importance.

First, America, including its workforce, is becoming increasing diverse, racially and ethically. Derald Wing Sue (1991) writes that "we are fast becoming a multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual society. Such demographic changes are having a major impact on economic, social, legal, political, educational and cultural systems (p. 1)" Offerman & Gowing, (1990) confirmed this observation in a special issue of the American Psychologist. By the time the "baby boomers" retire, the workforce supporting their retirement will be comprised largely of ethnic minority workers (Johnson & Packer, as cited in Sue, 1990) over half of whom were raised in poverty (Horowitz & O'Brien, cited in Offerman & Gowing, 1990). The impact of these demographic changes means that organizational consultants, whether they serve education or business clients, will be providing consultation services to minority individuals and client systems in future years.

Secondly, the business community is rapidly changing it complexion and its markets. Downsizing, business failures, corporate mergers, and hostile takeovers are changing the face of America's business community, forcing it to seek global markets (Lewis, 1987; Offerman & Gowing, 1990; Rigby, 1987). Today's corporations conduct business throughout all regions of the world including those formerly our adversaries, such as the former Soviet Republic and East Germany.

A global marketplace requires sophisticated interpersonal, human resource, and technical skills in order to serve diverse organizational systems and individuals with world views and values quite different from those of America (Rigby, 1987). Becoming culturally skilled to communicate and work with different cultural groups is essential if American companies are to compete successfully, in the global economy.

Third, America has failed to understand how race and racial bias influence our organizational functioning. Racial tensions have risen in the last decade, according to Ponterotto (1991). He writes that multicultural researchers have reported that race-based intergroup confrontation have been noted in high schools (Sherman, cited in Ponterotto, 1991) and at colleges and universities (Ponterotto,

Lewis and Bullington, cited in Ponterotto, 1991). Foiled attempts to manage organizational bias and racism leave a painful, costly organizational schism which, if unattended, restricts an organization's functioning at many levels. Joe Feagin (cited in Watts and Carter, 1992) noted that African Americans and other racial minorities continue to face barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace despite over forty years of civil and human rights efforts to eradicate racism and other forms of bias. Others (Alderfer, Alderfer, Tucker & Tucker, 1980; Chesler & Delgado, 1987; Watts & Carter, 1992) concur with the concern that racism permeates the workplace and restricts productivity and overall functioning.

These reasons suggest organizational consultants have an ethical responsibility to become clinically tooled sufficiently enough to help clients make sense of and manage race and ethnicity concerns. Accomplishing these new tasks requires that professionals begin the transformation by revising their definitions of organizational culture.

Organizational Culture Defined

Culture has as many definitions as there are cultural groups, yet those definitions all share points in common. Noted organizational scholar, Edgar Schein, writes that organizational culture represents a "(a) a pattern of basic

assumptions, (b) invented, discovered or developed, © as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, (e) taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." (1990, p. 111).

Culture represents a "deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs" that are shared by members of an organization. They [assumptions] operate unconsciously, and define an organization's view of itself and its environment in a basic `taken for granted' fashion (Schein, 1985, p. 6).

Organizational researcher, Geert Hofstede (cited in Rigby, 1987) observed that culture represents the "collective mental programming of the people in the environment". People within an organization see the world in ways in which they were "culturally conditioned to view it." As such, these cultural world views are learned over time and are slow and difficult to change.

In other words, a school, a factory, or a bank - all have a "culture" which is deeply held, learned likely over time, socially reinforced, and inseparable from the most basic of organizational operations. Such deeply held values and beliefs are formally and informally communicated in everyday workplace activities from

mail delivery to choice of time to break for lunch to the way individuals exit the organization. If an organization is to work and function optimally, it must have a set of guiding "cultural assumptions" - a "culture" - which employees, managers, and other workers, learn early.

Redefining Culture

The first step in developing multicultural consultation interventions begins by redefining organizational culture to explain race and ethnicity issues. Table 1 describes key definitional elements of culture, according to Edgar Schein (cited in Schein, 1990). Included are: 1) the organization's relationship to its environment; 2) the nature of human activity; 3) the nature of reality and truth; 4) the nature of time; 5) the nature of human nature; 6) the nature of human relationship and 7) homogeneity vs diversity. To the right of each item are key questions consultants would seek to clarify regarding each element.

Within those dimensions, there is no explicit mention of issues of "difference" such as race, nationality, or ethnic group variations. If one examines these typical cultural dimensions and the consultant questions they spawn, one receives little help in understanding race and ethnicity issues. However, if organizations were viewed in ways other than monocultural, then the door of

discovery for examining race issues might open.

Organizational Multicultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede, (cited in Rigby, 1987) in his studies concerning national cultures as they apply to management, identified four cultural dimensions. *Power Distance or PDI* is the degree to which organizational members believe power is unequally distributed. *Uncertainty avoidance or UAI* refers to the degree to which members feel uncomfortable with or threatened by uncertain or ambiguous situations. *Individualism-collectivism* refers to where members fall on a continuum with *individualism* suggesting that individuals prefer loosely knit social frameworks while at the *collectivism* end of the continuum, members prefer tight social frameworks with loyalty toward groups. *Masculinity* dimension suggests the degree to which individuals cherish the acquisition of money and objects, valuing those attributes that were ascribed to males typically over nurturing and caring for relationships, qualities ascribed to females, in most societies.

The definitional schema presented in table 2 expands and enhances Schein's cultural dimensions of organizational culture while blending together some of Hofstede's dimensions. This schema presumes organizations are

multicultural, multimodal, and multifaceted. It abandons traditional beliefs that characterize organizations as possessing singular, monolithic cultural assumptions which have characterize a white, male Eurocentric world, one not descriptive of today's organizations [or those of the future].

Those organizations defined as possessing multiple cultures are, by definition, heterogeneous with multiple realities and truths. Their functioning would be viewed along a continuum of beliefs or behaviors rather than by a singular, monolithic cultural dimension. The challenge for an organization and its leadership is to identify which experiences or set of behaviors represent anchors along each dimension.

The process of this organizational discovery leads to significant structural, interpersonal and environment transitions for the organization willing to risk a reexamination of its culture, its mission, and its norms. The likely outcome is a functioning, pluralistic environment, one ready for competition in a global world. The most productive and healthy organizations are those that recognize their placement along each cultural dimension and develop their organization's mission statements accordingly in ways which maximize their cultural, human resource and technical assets.

Challenges for Multicultural Consultants

The challenge of multicultural consultants within a culturally diverse organization is fourfold. First, consultants must help organizational members discover where their organizations fall along a continuum of cultural dimensions. Next, they must help members transform their organizations from monocultural to multicultural ones with new, cultural norms, goals and objectives. Third, consultants help their clients make organizational decisions based on transformed, cultural norms or goals. Lastly, consultants devise culturally appropriate evaluation mechanisms to determine the merits of those systemic changes and attitudinal shifts.

Healthy Culturally Appropriate Organizations

If organizations do alter their cultural assumptions, what does it mean? A well functioning, multicultural organizational system is one where:

1. Acceptance of differing organizational world views is affirmed and respected, not punished.

2. Organizational action is taken which promotes individual worker growth by building culturally appropriate work interactions.

3. Organizational structure allows cultural groups to flourish, while viewing their differences as a necessary human resource.
4. Action is taken immediately to remedy bias in all its forms, both internally and externally.
5. Cultural subgroups have varying impressions of the organization and of their work roles. The organization accommodates these varying impressions without punishment to workers for holding those beliefs.
6. Work performance is evaluated in culturally appropriate ways. Cultural subgroups are given the power to decide their own evaluation methods.
7. The practice of defining cultural differences as pathological within the organization is eliminated.
8. Human relationships are recognized as connective and collaborative.

Guidelines for Action

Some guidelines for consultants to use when working with organizations including the following. A working principle for the multicultural consultant is to remember that race defines organizational functioning in overt and covert ways which must be recognized and managed.

1. Organizational culture is heterogeneous and flexible in accommodating

divergent world views into the organizational mission.

2. Organizations understand how its members value tolerance for ambiguity and design work tasks and functions congruent with their comfort levels.
3. Organizations recognize that its members vary in their perceptions of power and authority and ability to accept those power dynamics.
4. Individual members vary in how they see themselves within the context of the organization. Some value individualism while others define themselves working "in relation" to another, and value a collective work sense.
5. Organizations recognize that racial bias and prejudice are intertwined within the organizational structure. They must take proactive steps to shift their practices from racist to race-respectful activities.

Summary

This paper has outlined several key elements necessary to redefine cultural components. These elements, when combined, mean a fundamental shift in the way an organization views itself. It suggests that effective and successful organizations, in today's global world, are those who see themselves as multicultural, utilizing the assets which come from having multiple realities and truths.

Organizational transformations of this magnitude do not occur overnight and they do not occur without conflict and resistance to change. Such a redefinition will produce conflict and resistance to change inevitably. Organizational consultants in the next decade will need to become culturally skilled to help their organizational clients mange the conflicts which arise when they embrace diversity, in all areas of functioning. The need to support consultants as they help clients through this transition is great, and challenges both counseling and I/O psychology training programs to address these multicultural issues within their ranks, too.

Research is needed to develop and validate multicultural consultation models of intervention. Consultation practitioners need to join with academic researchers and training specialists to validate and field test culturally appropriate interventions which describe the process organizations experience as they develop a "pluralistic culture". The result of these efforts toward recognizing a multicultural model of organizational consultation benefits the consultees or organizational clients, consultation and counseling psychology professions, and, most importantly, the global world community.

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Table 1
Some underlying Dimensions of Organizational Culture

Dimension	Questions to be answered
1. The organization's relationship to its environment	Does the organization perceive itself to be dominant, submissive, harmonizing, searching out a niche?
2. The nature of human activity	Is the "correct" way for humans to behave to be dominant/pro-active, harmonizing, or passive/fatalistic?
3. The nature of reality and truth	How do we define what is true and what is not true; and how is truth ultimately determined both in the physical and social world? By pragmatic test, reliance on wisdom, or social consensus?
4. The nature of time	What is our basic orientation in terms of past, present, and future, and what kinds of time units are most relevant for the conduct of daily affairs?
5. The nature of human nature	Are humans basically good, neutral, or evil, and is human nature perfectible or fixed?
6. The nature of human relationships	What is the "correct" way for people to relate to each other, to distribute power and affection? Is life competitive or cooperative? Is the best way to organize society on the basis of individualism or groupism? Is the best authority system autocratic/paternalistic or collegial/participative?
7. Homogeneity vs. diversity	Is the group best off if it is highly diverse or if it is highly homogeneous, and should individuals in a group be encouraged to innovate or conform?

Adapted from *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (p. 86) by E. H. Schein, 1985, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 1985 by Jossey-Bass.

Table 2

Multicultural Components Within Organizational Culture

Dimension	Questions to be answered
1. The organization's relationship to its environment.	How does the organizational perceive itself within a global multicultural world? How is difference acknowledged within the organization?
Dominant ..... Harmonizing	
2. The nature of human activity.	How do members see themselves as acting within the organization? What is the continuum of workplace-appropriate behaviors?
Monocultural way of action ..... Multicultural ways of action	
3. The nature of reality and truth.	How do cultural groups view reality and truth? How are these different views valued?
Singular, predetermined truth ..... Multiple realities/truths	
4. The nature of race and ethnicity.	How does the organization make sense of race and ethnicity? How do our beliefs about race influence interactions? How are financial choices affected by race?
Race bias ..... Race blind ..... Race naive ..... Race affirmative	

Table 2 - Continued
Multicultural Components Within Organizational Culture

Dimension	Questions to be answered
5. The nature of time.	What is the continuum of perceptions of time? What does time mean to members?
Singular perception ..... Multiple perceptions of time	
6. The nature of human relationships.	How do employers relate to each other in a global organization? How do workers' world views define whether human relationships are good, evil, or harmonious?
Individualism ..... Collectivism	
7. The nature of human nature.	Does the organization see people as good, neutral or bad? Does it see cultures as good, neutral or bad?
Good. .....Neutral ..... Bad	
8. The nature of power and influence.	How do members perceive those in power within the organization? Do members perceive power as held by an individual or set of individuals?
Power inequitably distributed ..... Power equitably distributed	
9. The nature of heterogeneity.	How diverse is the organization in terms of value, ethnic/racial makeup, in decision making, etc.? How is the heterogeneity valued?
Homogeneity ..... Heterogeneity	

Modified from *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. (p. 86) (1985) by E. H. Schein, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.